

## Message Text

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44

ACTION SS-25

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R 150940 Z MAR 73  
FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6301

S E C R E T HONG KONG 2570

EXDIS

NOFORN

E. O. 11652: XGDS-3  
TAGS: PFOR, CH, US  
SUBJ: PROPOSED TRAVEL BY CONGENOFFS TO CANTON FAIR

REF: ( A ) HK 1071; ( B ) HK 6501, 1972; ( C ) HK A-283, 1972

SUMMARY: REFTEL A RECOMMENDED THAT USG SEEK TO HAVE TWO CONGEN OFFICERS ATTEND PRC' S CANTON TRADE FAIR, WHICH IS DUE TO OPEN APRIL 15. WE UNDERSTAND THAT RECOMMENDATION WAS FAVORABLY RECEIVED WITHIN USG, BUT WE DO NOT KNOW CURRENT STATUS OF MATTER. IN THE MEANTIME, ATMOSPHERE HERE HAS DEVELOPED TO POINT WHERE WE CONSIDER THAT APPLI- CATIONS TO ATTEND THE FAIR COULD BE MADE THROUGH PRC AGENCIES IN HONG KONG WITHOUT CAUSING EMBARRASSMENT OR DIFFICULTIES, AND WITH SOME PROSPECT OF SUCCESS. REQUEST ADVICE. END SUMMARY

1. REFTEL A RECOMMENDED THAT TWO CONGEN OFFICERS, WILLIAM F. ROPE AND LINWOOD R. STARBIRD, WHO, RESPECTIVELY, REPORT ON PRC TRADE AND INTERNAL ECONOMIC AFFAIRS, ATTEND CHINA' S 1973 SPRING CANTON TRADE FAIR WHICH OPENS APRIL 15. WE NOTED THAT THE USG' S ABILITY TO ASSIST US BUSINESSMEN AT THE FAIR WOULD BE MATERIALLY ENHANCED BY THE ON- THE- SPOT PRESENCE OF THESE TWO OFFICERS, AND THERE WOULD BE ADDITIONAL ADVANTAGES FOR THE CONGEN' S REPORTING ON PRC ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT SINCE TRIPS TO THE FAIRS USUALLY AFFORD OPPORTUNITIES FOR VISITS TO FACTORIES, COMMUNES  
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AND OTHER ECONOMIC UNITS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THIS PROPOSAL WAS FAVORABLY RECEIVED BY CONCERNED USG AGENCIES, BUT WE ARE UNAWARE OF THE STATUS OF ANY DISCUSSIONS WITH THE PRC ABOUT IT.

2. THE CONGEN CONTINUES TO THINK THAT THE DISPATCH OF THE TWO OFFICERS TO THE SPRING FAIR IS A FEASIBLE AND USEFUL PROPOSITION TO PUT FORWARD AT THIS TIME. WHILE REFTEL A CONTEMPLATED THAT THE PARIS CHANNEL WOULD BE MOST APPROPRIATE FOR PURSUING THE OFFICERS' APPLICATIONS, THE ATMOSPHERE LOCALLY HAS NOW DEVELOPED TO THE POINT WHERE AN APPROACH IN HONG KONG MAY ALSO BE WORTH CONSIDERING. PRC HAS ON THREE OCCASIONS IN LAST FIVE WEEKS TAKEN INITIATIVE IN TRANSACTING OFFICIAL BUSINESS WITH CONGEN USING NCNA AS CHANNEL. THIS SUGGESTS THAT PAST INHIBITIONS AGAINST HONG KONG AS VENUE FOR CONTACTS MAY HAVE BEEN OVERCOME.

3. RECENTLY, RELATIONS BETWEEN THE CONGEN AND THE CHINA RESOURCES COMPANY (CRC), PEKING'S PRINCIPAL STATE TRADING AGENCY IN HONG KONG, HAVE ALSO BEEN CORDIAL. DEPARTING COMMERCIAL OFFICER IDE PAID FAREWELL CALL ON T. CH'EN (REFS B AND C) ON MARCH 9, ACCOMPANIED BY ROPE, AND FOUND CH'EN NOTICEABLY FRIENDLIER AND MORE WILLING TO TALK ABOUT BROAD RANGE OF SINO-US COMMERCIAL RELATIONS THAN ON PREVIOUS OCCASIONS. SINCE THAT CALL, ROPE HAS BEEN IN CONTACT WITH CH'EN ON SEVERAL ROUTING MATTERS AND ATMOSPHERE REMAINS EXTREMELY CORDIAL.

4. THUS IT WOULD NOT SEEM POSSIBLE FOR ROPE AND STARBIRD TO APPLY IN HONG KONG THROUGH CRC, AS DO OFFICERS FROM OTHER CONSULATES GENERAL IN HONG KONG. LAST FALL, WELL IN ADVANCE OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF JAPANESE EMBASSY IN PEKING, A HONG KONG-BASED JAPANESE CONGENOFF WAS ISSUED A VISA TO ATTEND THE 1972 FALL FAIR. (IN THAT CASE, APPLICATION WAS MADE THROUGH THE CHINA TRAVEL SERVICE HONG KONG (CTS), SINCE THE JAPANESE CONGEN HAD ESTABLISHED A PARTICULARLY GOOD WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH CTS.) ACCORDING TO THE JAPANESE OFFICER CONCERNED, HIS GOVERNMENT HAD NOT PREARRANGED THE APPLICATION OR ITS APPROVAL THROUGH TALKS WITH PRC AUTHORITIES. SINCE THE PRESENT STATE OF US-PRC RELATIONS IS SOMEWHAT COMPARABLE TO THAT  
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OF SINO-JAPANESE RELATIONS AT THAT TIME, THE PROSPECTS

FOR PRC APPROVAL IN THE CASE OF ROPE AND STARBIRD WOULD  
APPEAR REASONABLY GOOD.

5. IF ROPE AND STARBIRD ARE TO APPLY IN HONG KONG, HOWEVER,  
THE APPLICATION MUST BE MADE SOON. SINCE T. CH' EN HAS  
INDICATED THAT CRC HAS NO NEW INSTRUCTIONS FROM PEKING' S  
MINISTRY OF FOREIGN TRADE CONCERNING CRC' S FUTURE ROLE  
IN DEALING WITH US BUSINESSMEN OR TRADE OFFICIALS, IT  
SEEMS LIKELY THAT CRC WOULD HAVE TO FORWARD THE OFFICERS'  
APPLICATIONS TO CANTON OR PEKING FOR CONSIDERATION, AND  
IT MIGHT TAKE SEVERAL WEEKS FOR AN ANSWER TO BE COMMUNIC-  
ATED BACK TO HONG KONG.

6. SHOULD THE DEPARTMENT CONCUR IN ROPE AND STARBIRD  
APPLYING LOCALLY, IT WOULD STILL, WE PRESUME, BE DESIRABLE  
FOR USG TO ADVISE THE PRC THROUGH OTHER CHANNELS THAT  
APPLICATIONS WERE BEING MADE THROUGH HONG KONG, AND TO  
EXPRESS HOPE THAT THE APPLICATIONS WOULD BE APPROVED.

7. CONGEN WOULD APPRECIATE DEPARTMENT' S ADVICE.  
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